

THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN

A step towards greater consultation, cooperation and coordination on Muslim Affairs in the UK.

Muslim Council of Britain Weekly E-Newsletter

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Reports and Events

Books 4 Schools Project Launch

Launched on 27 March in Manchester with a spirit of self-help and constructive action, Books 4 Schools a major initiative of the MCB*Direct* team, has captured the attention, enthusiasm and goodwill of Britain's Muslim community. Distinguished guests attending the event included the Chief Educational Officer for Manchester Mick Waters, Gerald Kaufman MP, and Professor Salim al-Hassani one of the UK's senior-most professors in Mechanical Engineering. Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie addressed the event, which raised funds for the provision of books and other information resources on Islam to support the teaching of RE in schools. Dr Azhar Sheikh, one of the founders of the MCB*Direct* initiative, gave an excellent presentation on the project which was well received by the audience. MCB national affiliate Islamic Society of Britain (ISB) assisted ReDoc in organising the event.

Messages of support have been received from parents, schools and educationalists throughout Britain. After only a month of fund raising, Books 4 Schools – a community project aiming to get high-quality Islamic educational materials into state schools – has already raised an impressive £50,000!

“We have been overwhelmed by the support being received from all parts of Britain”, said Dr Azhar Sheikh. Commenting on his motivation for putting in hours of work both before and after his long-day in the office as a dentist, Dr Azhar reflects, “I remember the poor quality, inaccurate materials on Islam available when I was at school and I am determined to ensure that, God willing, we as a community equip schools with the materials – books, artefacts, multimedia resources and support notes – that teachers need in order to present to our children a correct understanding of Islam and Muslims”.

Sponsoring a pack couldn't be simpler and only costs £250 per school. Both *Zakah* (alms tax) payments and simple straightforward donations are acceptable and there are also a variety of sponsorship opportunities available for businesses, so anyone and everyone can contribute to this community self-help project.

With your support, and working on your behalf, we aim to get MCB approved Islamic resources into schools the length and breadth of Britain. By providing children with an authentic understanding of Islam, we hope to sow seeds that will flourish into tolerance and harmony amongst Britain's diverse communities. For further information refer to www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect/feature.php?ann_id=231.

MCB Meeting with Secretary of State for Education

A delegation from the Muslim Council of Britain met the Secretary of State for Education, Mr Charles Clarke and senior government officials at the Department for Education and Skills on Tuesday 20 April 2004.

A number of important issues were raised with Charles Clarke, namely the underachievement of Muslim pupils, non-statutory framework for Religious Education, collective worship, MCB Books4schools project, Hijab, difficulties that Muslim university students will face with respect to interest loans, and Muslim faith schools. These matters were received positively and on the subject of Hijab, the Secretary of State reaffirmed government policy that the ban of Hijab in French schools would not be implemented in Britain.

The delegation comprised of Secretary General, Iqbal Sacranie, Tahir Alam, Chair of the Education Committee, Dr Othman Moqbul, President of The Federation of Students Islamic Societies In the UK & Eire (FOSIS), Zahida Hussain, Head Teacher at al-Furqan School and Dr Naseem Butt, Head Teacher at Brondesbury College. The Secretary of State for Education and Skills agreed to have quarterly meetings with the Muslim Council of Britain to discuss and progress issues relating to the British Muslim community with respect to education.

Muslims Encouraged to go into the Teaching Profession

The MCB Education Committee, under the chairmanship of Tahir Alam, has launched a campaign to promote awareness of educational issues that face Muslim pupils and to work towards increased participation in schools by Muslims as governors and teachers. This initiative is supported Al-Hijrah Trust, an educational charity.

"There are quite simply not enough Muslims going into the teaching profession who have the additional quality of being role models," said Mr Alam. "The result is that there are very few Muslims in leadership positions within schools, even in schools with a high composition of Muslim pupils."

"Schools face serious challenges in trying to overcome issues and barriers that have resulted in disaffection and underachievement. But this task is made more difficult when there is very little input into the solutions that are being implemented to address disaffection and educational disenfranchisement of children."

In recognising this great need, the MCB is engaging in a countywide targeted promotional campaign to increase the number of Muslim teachers going into the teaching profession and promoting greater and more effective participation in school governance by the Muslim communities in various cities where there are high concentrations of Muslim population. This will be done through working with local MCE affiliate organisations to deliver awareness and development training to those who are interested in making a difference. In addition, promotional presentations will be given at major Muslim conferences and programmes organised by MCB affiliates. It is also planned to promote this through Radio broadcasts during month of Ramadan.

The training and development programme has been piloted in three cities Luton, Bradford and Preston. 'We are now in a position to offer this on a wider national scale,' said Tahir Alam.

Anyone wishing help or get involved in this or would like this to be promoted at a conference or in their

city and town should contact us. If you are a Muslim teacher or Governor then we would like to hear from you. Please email education@mcb.org.uk or contact 0121 773 3207.

Letter to Mosques and Community Leaders

On 31 March 2004, the MCB sent out a letter to mosques and community leaders in the UK urging a concerted effort to work for the peace and security of all in our country. The letter emphasised the need for the grassroots community to be vigilant against the use of misleading and denigrating phrases such as "Islamic Terrorists" urging that they take this issue up directly with whosoever uses these phrases, be it government officials, media organisations or other institutions. The words of the Qur'an are clear:

"If anyone kills a human being, unless it be (in punishment) for murder, or of spreading corruption in the land, it should be looked upon as though he had slain all mankind, and if anyone saves a life it should be regarded as though he had saved the lives of all mankind."(5:32)

The full text of the letter is available online at <http://www.mcb.org.uk/Imamletter-31March04.pdf>. The text of the letter was also published by The Muslim Weekly (<http://www.themuslimweekly.com/weekly/mcbletter.htm>)

On 31 March, the Secretary of the Media Committee was interviewed on BBC Breakfast TV regarding the letter to Imams. This can be viewed online at http://news.bbc.co.uk/media/video/39985000/rm/39985587_muslim08_bunglawala_vi.ram

The rationale for the letter was expressed in an article by Inayat Bunglawala published in the Daily Express on 1 April 2004 entitled 'We must unite to defeat this threat'. The article makes it clear that "At the Muslim Council of Britain, we see it as the duty of all Britons, Muslims and non-Muslims, to work together to thwart any danger to this country and its inhabitants" and goes on to explore the wider context of events in this country since 9/11 pointing out that according to Home Office figures, between 9/11 and December 31st 2003, 537 people were arrested under anti-terror legislation, with 14 of them being charged with terrorist-related offences; 263 people were released without charge and only 6 convictions had actually been secured. For the full text of the article refer to www.mcb.org.uk

Inayat Bunglawala also took part in an online discussion on this topic which can be read at <http://islamonline.net/livedialogue/english/Browse.asp?hGuestID=B58W56>

A press statement released by Harrow's Muslim leaders on 7 April stated that it "welcomed the stance on terrorism taken by the Muslim Council of Britain and applauded the advice issued in vocally and unreservedly rejecting terrorism in all its forms." These sentiments were echoed by many others including a Friday Sermon (Khutbah) delivered to the East London Mosque congregation on 2 April 2004 in which the Imam said "This week the Muslim Council of Britain wrote to all mosques and Muslim leaders to give guidance to the Muslim community. At the same time they continue to draw the attention of the Government and the media to the plight of Muslims in Britain due to religious discrimination and incitement to religious hatred. We appreciate their hard work in representing the need of Muslims."

MCB Thank Muslim Community For Support

In a follow up letter to mosques and Muslim organisations on 9 April 2004, Iqbal AKM Sacranie, Secretary General of The Muslim Council of Britain expressed appreciation for the large number of letters from Muslim and non-Muslim organisations and individuals both from within the UK and abroad supporting and understanding the need to fully cooperate with the authorities in preventing any terrorist activity or atrocity in Britain. The letter sought to put clear blue water between the religion of Islam and the Muslim community and any association with terrorism stating Islam condemns all forms of terrorism whether it is carried out by individuals, organisations or states.

The MCB Secretary General rejected attempts from some elements to distort the message and intention of the letter and sow seeds of discord in the community. He emphasized that while there is a need for the Muslim community to be alert, there was absolutely no suggestion that Muslims should spy on one another, something that is categorically forbidden in the Qur'an. The letter emphasises that Muslims have 'a civic and Islamic duty' to work with the authorities for the safety of the community and the society, and to ensure that no Muslim is ensnared into any terrorist-related activity by 'shadowy zealots and agent provocateurs'.

For the full text please refer to www.mcb.org.uk

National Muslim Leadership Meeting in Leicester

At the invitation of the MCB, over a hundred Muslim Imams, leaders of national Muslim bodies, academics and key Muslim activists met at the Markfield Conference Centre, Leicester on Saturday 24th April to discuss the issues facing the community and to provide the MCB with advice. Among those present were Mufti Aslam of the Jamiat-e-Ulema Britain, Maulana Shoaib Mirpuri of the Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith UK, and imams of mosques and Islamic centres from a variety of towns and cities. Issues discussed included the heavy handed police raids and the impact these later had on community relations, often in themselves proving to be no more than 'fishing expeditions'. The imams presented ideas for expanding 'mosque open day' programmes, making mosques more welcoming for young persons and also becoming more engaged in inter-faith dialogues. Many of the ulema called on the community to retain a sense of optimism and hope in these difficult times, citing the Prophetic tradition, "Amazing is the believer, for whatever Allah decrees for him! If he is tested with a bounty, he is grateful for it and this is better for him; and if he is afflicted with a hardship, he is patient with it and this is better for him." The ulema and imams called on the MCB to open regional offices in Leicester and other towns and offered their full support and backing.

Meeting with Home Secretary

As part of their regular quarterly meetings with the Home Secretary, on 6 April 2004 a MCB delegation comprising Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General, Daud Abdullah, Assistant Secretary General, Sadiq Khan, Chair Legal Affairs Committee, Sher Khan, Chair Public Affairs Committee and Shabana Khan,

Vice Chair of Research & Documentation Committee, met with David Blunkett, the Home Office Minister, Fiona Mactaggart and senior Home Office officials to convey a number of grave concerns affecting the British Muslim community.

During the meeting Mr Blunkett reiterated the government's decision to forge ahead with legislation outlawing incitement to religious hatred. This the MCB welcomed, but emphasised that this major lacuna in law needed to be addressed with urgency as it has been a major concern of British Muslims for a number of years.

Responding to the serious concerns of British Muslims about the reported implantation of spies and the recruitment of agent provocateurs in the community by the MI5 as well as recent press reports of MI5 agents approaching some Muslim families urging them to send their children overseas, the Home Secretary acknowledged that such practice will be clearly divisive and gave an undertaking to investigate the matter fully.

Mr Blunkett acknowledged the harmful consequences of the use of offensive jargon such as "Islamic terrorists". He assured the delegation that the Home Office favoured the use of the term "international terrorism" and agreed to provide guidance to all government departments to avoid the use of inflammatory language which could lead to harming community relations and instilling fear in the wider population.

Joint GLA & MCB Conference for Imams and Muslim Leaders in London

The MCB and GLA have jointly organised a conference on The Peace and Security of London Communities. Mayor Ken Livingstone hosted the conference for imams and Muslim leaders on Tuesday 27 April. The purpose of the conference was to encourage Muslim communities in London to feed into the work of the Greater London Authority Group, which can support their active participation in the life of the capital. The Greater London Authority Group comprises: The Greater London Authority; Metropolitan Police Authority; Transport for London; London Development Agency; London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority.

In addition to the Mayor, speakers included Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain and Anthony Mayer, Chief Executive at the Greater London Authority discussed the forthcoming Mayoral, Assembly and European Elections. Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner David Veness spoke about anti-terrorism legislation and continuing efforts to ensure the safety and security of Londoners.

The Mayor said: "The Greater London Authority is the first elected regional government body and all its citizens have a stake in its status as a great world-class city, one that has an unrivalled reputation for tolerance and acceptance of different communities. It is essential to work with all stakeholders in the capital, including London's Muslim communities and that they are able to inform the development of policies and strategies for this great city. My office and the Greater London Authority will continue to work closely with the Muslim community, to ensure it is able to participate fully in the political and

cultural life of the capital, challenge Islamophobia and around security and safety concerns affecting all Londoners."

Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain added: "It is vital that London's 700,000 strong Muslim community are given the necessary information, support and tools to fulfil their true potential and help ensure the continued growth, stability and prosperity of this great city."

Atrocities in Madrid

"The hearts of Muslims and all peoples of conscience go out to families of those whose loved ones have been murdered and those who have been wounded in these appalling atrocities. It is the fervent hope of the MCB that the real organisers and perpetrators of these monumental crimes against humanity will soon be identified and held to account. We urge all concerned to exercise the greatest circumspection in dealing with such crimes against humanity which affect everyone in our world community," said MCB Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie in a press release issued on 13 March 2004. On 16th March a delegation visited the Spanish Ambassador to the UK, the Marques de Tamaron, and signed the Book of Condolence. The delegation included Sabah al-Mukhtar, chair of the MCB's Europe & International Affairs committee, Sara Khan, President of MCB affiliate Young Muslim Sisters, Muhammad Sawalha of the MCB affiliate, the Muslim Association of Britain, and Ahmed Versi, Editor of The Muslim News. The press releases can be found online at www.mcb.org.uk

Muslims Welcome Return of Five British Guantanamo Detainees

The Muslim Council of Britain welcomed the return of five of the British detainees from Guantanamo Bay on 9 March 2004. The MCB Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie noted that the young men "have been through an appallingly lengthy and unjust ordeal in which they were deliberately held in a legal limbo by the US authorities. The priority now must be for these returnees to receive immediate counselling and medical help."

The MCB continues to call upon the government to bring home the remaining four British detainees still being held at Guantanamo Bay.

"We do not believe the remaining British detainees can receive a fair trial in the United States where senior members of the US government from President Bush down have made a series of severely prejudicial statements about them. Their continued incarceration is a blot on that country's claim to be the land of the free," added Mr Sacranie.

Muslim Graves Desecrated

On Thursday 18 March, over 40 Muslim graves were found to have been desecrated at Charlton cemetery in Plumstead, South East London. This act of vandalism is being treated as a faith hate crime by the Metropolitan Police. The MCB welcomed the statement of support from the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, who in his letter stated "Desecration of a cemetery is deeply offensive in

any circumstances but it is especially threatening and unacceptable if it is targeted at a particular community or motivated by racial or religious hatred. An attack on the Muslim community or any other minority is an attack on all of us." The Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, also pledged to work with London's Muslims to combat Islamophobia.

Neville Nagler, Director-General of the Board of Deputies of British Jews wrote to the Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain to condemn the desecration of Muslim gravestones in the Charlton cemetery and express the Jewish community's sympathy over the shocking event. Mr Sacranie responded saying "We greatly appreciate receiving your thoughtful message of sympathy on the desecration of Muslim Graves at Charlton Cemetery last week. Both our communities have been at the receiving end of these despicable actions which can only have been carried out by hooligans. We hope and pray that the culprits are apprehended in due course. "

Terrorist State Murders

On 22 March 2004, the Muslim Council of Britain issued a statement condemning in the strongest terms Israel's criminal assassination of Shaykh Ahmad Isma'il Yasin, the renowned Islamic scholar and founder of the leading Palestinian Resistance Movement - Hamas. "This heinous act of state terrorism against this disabled man as he was leaving the mosque after the morning Fajr prayers is pushing the entire region ever closer to the abyss of mayhem and must be stopped," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the MCB.

The MCB called upon the British Government and its partners in the European Union to take immediate and effective measures to bring about an end to Israel's decades-long illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories and uphold the rule of international law.

A further MCB statement was released on 17 April, on the murder of the Hamas leader Dr Abdul Aziz al-Rantisi by Israeli forces which served to underline the immense danger Israel and its main ally - the United States - represents to the cause of peace and stability in the Middle East. The release highlighted ongoing Israeli state terrorism, pointing out that "With every passing day, it is becoming ever clearer to much of the globe's population that the systematic oppression and brutalisation of the Palestinian people by the Israelis is only serving to heighten the tension in our troubled world."

For the full text refer to www.mcb.org.uk

Muslim Delegation Invited by Navy

Khurshid Drabu, Muslim member of the Ministry of Defence's religious advisory panel and constitutional advisor to the MCB, Dr Daud Abdullah, MCB Assistant Secretary General, Shibani Akbar, Chair of the MCB Social Affairs, Dr Reefat Drabu, Chair of the Women & Family Affairs Committee, Ahmed Versi, Editor of the Muslim News and Hashir Faruqi, editor of Impact International visited the Portsmouth Naval Base on 27 February, as guests of Vice-Admiral Burnell-Nugent. The Muslim delegation made the case for the appointment of Muslim imams in a 'chaplainship' role. This step, together with the RN's other efforts such as catering for dietary requirements and dress codes,

and putting aside time for prayers and religious observances would encourage young Muslims to consider the Royal Navy as a career option.

Vice-Admiral Burnell-Nugent said: "The Royal Navy is very aware of the needs of different faith and ethnic communities, and has actively introduced policies to meet those needs. I am always happy to listen to and address any concerns about perceived barriers to joining the service."

Friends of the Army

Khurshid Drabu was honoured with an invitation to dinner for Friends of the Army hosted by Chief of the General Staff General Sir Mike Jackson at the Royal Hospital Chelsea on 4 March 2004. This is an extremely prestigious event and the MCB is very pleased that Mr Drabu's excellent work on the MOD Religious Advisory Panel has been recognised. He was the only member of the Panel to receive the invitation and was one of only ten guests invited to the function. The function was also attended by a number of Generals, Major Generals and Lieutenant Generals.

Ashura Day Atrocities

The Muslim Council of Britain condemns utterly the vile criminals responsible for the series of explosions in Baghdad and Karbala, and the shootings in Quetta, Pakistan, on 2 March which killed and maimed hundreds of innocent Muslims. "The perpetrators of these terrible crimes - committed on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn - are clearly trying to set Sunni and Shi'a communities against one another. They must not be allowed to succeed. We sincerely hope that the leaders of the two communities will respond in a considered manner and refuse to allow themselves to be provoked into an internecine conflict in which the main victims can only be the people of Iraq and Pakistan themselves," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Carey's Comments Rejected

On 26 March 2004, the MCB released a press statement rejecting the comments made by Lord Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury, at a conference in Rome as unhelpful to the promotion of dialogue and understanding between the various faith communities.

"In his myopic vision of the Middle East, Lord Carey seems also to show little understanding of the role played by Western powers in propping up many of the regimes all over the world," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

For the full press release refer to www.mcb.org.uk

Cardinal O'Connor's Off-Key Remarks

A press release from The Muslim Council of Britain on 11 April 2004 declared that Muslims were at 'a total loss to understand the wholly unjustified remarks' from the Head of the Catholic Church in

England and Wales, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, when he alleged that Muslim leaders were not doing enough to condemn acts of terror.

Although the Cardinal acknowledged the MCB's stand in denouncing terrorism clearly and courageously, which was resonated throughout the Muslim community, he still seemed to persist in 'continuing to beat the Muslim community with the stick of terrorism'.

There was appreciation though for Cardinal O'Connor's call for Western countries to examine the root causes of terror.

For the full press release refer to www.mcb.org.uk

US Israeli-Style Siege of Fallujah

"The Muslim Council of Britain is appalled at the ongoing atrocities and indiscriminate killings being committed by US forces in Iraq," the MCB said in a statement issued on 8 April 2004. The statement said that recent events 'will do nothing to help dispel the impression that the United States is attempting to break the will of the Iraqi people' and urged 'our government to distance itself from the United States and pull British troops out of the Iraqi quagmire'. The extent of casualties over the past few weeks in Fallujah to date include at least 800 Iraqi civilians, among them women and children, murdered by the US Army.

Pictures taken by the Al-Jazeera news crew in Fallujah can be viewed at: <http://www.aljazeera.net/images/fallojah%20galary.swf> For the full press release refer to www.mcb.org.uk

Letter to American Embassy

Mr Dan Sreenby, the Minister Counselor for Public Affairs at the Embassy of the USA in London sent a letter in response to the MCB press release which can be found online at <http://www.usembassy.org.uk/ukpa08apr04.html> . The MCB responded in turn by making it clear that in "unleashing such massive and indiscriminate response which has resulted in the deaths of many civilians including small children, the US appears to have been not only in clear violation of the Geneva Conventions governing the obligations of an occupying power, but in attacking a mosque, a place of worship, it was also violating the religious sanctity and deep sensitivities of Muslims the world over. There is now undoubtedly an urgent need for an independent inquiry into the conduct of the marines and coalition forces which has resulted in the loss of more than 460 civilians including children." For the full text of the press release refer to www.mcb.org.uk

Religious Tolerance in Britain

On Tuesday 20 April 2004, the Community Cohesion Pathfinder Project of the East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre organised a one day conference, 'Religious Tolerance in Britain'. The

conference, which was supported by Tower Hamlets Council, the Foreign Office, the Muslim Council of Britain, Inner Cities Religious Council of the ODPM, COF, SPECeast and the MCB Affiliates, Islamic Forum Europe, explored the theological foundations of religious tolerance and community cohesion. Speakers included Mike O'Brien, Minister of State at the FCO; Leonie Lewis, Director of the Community Development Group of the United Synagogues; Harmandar Singh, Policy Advisor, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Chief Executive's Department; Neil Jameson, Executive Director, Citizen Organising Foundation, Telco and Rumman Ahmad, Advisor, Home Secretary's Race Equality Advisory Panel.

Speaking on the conference Mr Habibur-Rahman, Honorary Secretary of the East London Mosque said "It is our hope that upon completion the London Muslim Centre – a project of the East London Mosque will become a beacon of community cohesion in Britain." As a long established community in Britain, it is indeed a great cause for concern that so many members of the Muslim community are vilified due to the offensive and incorrect attribution of terrorism to Islam. The long-term solution for combating terrorism is "for our Government along with the international community to address and solve the issues of global injustices, particularly in the Muslim world" concluded Habib.

Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the MCB, in his concluding speech at the conference said "in our daily lives, from the mundane to the momentous, we interact with others who share a different set of beliefs to us. We are bound together in a shared community in Britain." The full text of his speech can be found online at www.mcb.org.uk. For further information on the conference email conference@londonmuslimcentre.org.uk or phone 0207 247 2626.

MCB Supports 'Shakespeare & Islam' Season

"The need to build ever stronger bridges and closer links between cultures has never been more important", noted Lord Howell of Guildford at the launch of the 'Shakespeare and Islam' programme at the Globe Theatre in London on 25 February 2004. On 7 April 2004, Professor Nabil Matar, author of the pioneering study 'Islam in Britain, 1558-1685' delivered the Sam Wanamaker Fellowship lecture at the Globe on 'Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Moor'. Professor M A S Abdel Haleem, Director of Islamic Studies, SOAS, has also been a guest speaker.

The Director of Globe Education, Patrick Spottiswoode, has on several occasions publicly acknowledged the support from The Muslim Council of Britain, particularly the encouragement of Iqbal Sacranie and Dr Abdul Bari. Over the course of the year, the Globe's Education department is organising school projects, lectures and courses. The MCB has circulated details of the programme to affiliates. Patrick Spottiswoode and his team are keen to promote the programme within schools. Further information can be obtained from the Globe directly, 0207 902 1400 (www.shakespeares-globe.org).

Royal Observatory Greenwich Islamic Collection

Joint work is underway with the Royal Observatory Greenwich to encourage Muslims to find out more

about its Islamic collection and use its facilities. The MCB contact is Usama Hasan an amateur astronomer himself who would like to form a group of Muslim astronomers.

Against the background of the rich heritage of Islamic astronomy, The Royal Observatory (www.rog.nmm.ac.uk), Greenwich, in collaboration with the Muslim Council of Britain, invited members of the Muslim community to "An Evening with the Stars" on Friday 5 March, as part of its community outreach programme. Thirty-two guests attended, including astronomers, schoolchildren, teachers, lecturers, businessmen, medical doctors, imams, community workers, journalists and other professionals.

The Observatory's extensive Islamic collection, that includes antique astrolabes, *qibla* indicators, sextants and globes, is due to go on display at the National Maritime Museum (www.nmm.ac.uk) from the end of April. The Muslim Council of Britain plans to continue its co-operation with the Royal Observatory and National Maritime Museum in their work with different communities, including faith-based ones. Please contact the MCB office if you would like more information about future events and activities.

MCB Annual General Meeting

The MCB AGM is to be held on 22 May 2004 at Brent Town Hall. An information pack with delegate forms have been sent out. Observers who wish to attend need to complete a Guest Form which can be obtained from the MCB Office.

Dr Ayub Thakur

"Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un. From Allah we come and unto Him we shall return." The British Muslim community bears a sense of loss with the demise of Dr Ayub Thakur, a dedicated worker in the cause of Muslim unity and a long-standing well-wisher of the MCB. He was chairman of Mercy Universal, a UK-based charity working for the Kashmiri people. Funeral prayers (salat al-janaza) for Dr Ayyub Thakur were held at the Islamic Cultural Centre, Regent's Park, London, after the Jumu'ah prayers on Friday March 12th 2004. Members of the Muslim community from across the country were present at the funeral prayers, along with distinguished and eminent Kashmiris from different parts of the world.

Dr Zaki Badawi

The Muslim Council of Britain has conveyed its congratulations to Sheikh Dr Zaki Badawi for the Honorary Knighthood (KBE) that has been conferred on him, in recognition of outstanding work to Race Relations and the Muslim Community in the United Kingdom.

Training on Employment Law

Mosque imams, community workers, solicitors and other advice providers were invited to a workshop

on Saturday 20 March at the Islamic Cultural Centre, Regents Park, London on the new religious discrimination legislation affecting Muslims at the workplace. Speakers included expert equalities and discrimination lawyers Makbool Javaid, Maleiha Malik and Muhammad Abdul Aziz. The event was organised by the Muslim Council of Britain in partnership with MDUK, The Muslim News and the British Muslim Research Centre, with support from the Department of Trade & Industry. For further information email legal@mcb.org.uk or see www.mcb.org.uk/er.html

Muslim Weekly Page

The MCB have been given a full page spread in the Muslim Weekly to publish MCB news. For this we thank Mr Ahmed Malik, editor at the Muslim Weekly. The MCB Media Committee currently provide the news and welcome any contributions from the CWC and MCB affiliates to this page.

Inter-Faith Solidarity Meeting

At this time of violence and uncertainty, the Three Faiths Forum of Christians, Jews and Muslims, and the Muslim Council of Britain, organised a solidarity meeting on 19 April, at St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace & Reconciliation, in Bishopsgate, EC2.

The meeting was attended by senior figures from all three faith communities. Both the Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie and the founder of the Three Faiths Forum Sir Sigmund Sternberg, emphasised the importance of interfaith work and the need to support matters pertaining to religious tolerance and justice. Khurshid Drabu, MCB Constitutional Advisor, stressed the need for other faith communities to be seen to condemn acts of terrorism and violence perpetrated in the name of their faith with particular reference to acts of terrorism carried out by Ariel Sharon against the Palestinian people in the name of Judaism to protect the Jewish people.

Congress of Democrats from the Islamic World Conference held in Istanbul

"Islam is a religion of tolerance and peace." This was the emphasis of a joint declaration issued by the Islamic Countries Democracy Congress as their two day conference at Istanbul's Conrad Hotel was brought to a close between April 13 and 14 in Istanbul, Turkey.

MCB Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie attended the conference at the invitation of the National Democratic Institute, along with Lord Adam Patel and Hassan Al Banna of the Muslim Students Union. The conference was the first gathering of its kind involving political and community and religious leaders predominantly from Muslim countries including 80 participants from 14 countries. The attendees included former and present presidents, representatives of political parties and civil society organizations from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. The United Nations Development Fund, American National Democratic Institute and Turkish Democracy Foundation sponsored the Congress. The Congress discussed not only obstacles to implementing democratic reforms, but also recent developments in the countries with Muslim majorities.

Mr Sacranie moderated a workshop on the topic of “The role of the international community in supporting citizen-driven reforms” which underscored the fact that it is not only unhelpful but counterproductive to impose the system of democracy prevailing in the West on Muslim countries as they have their own system of governance based on inherent Islamic value which incorporate respect for tolerance, participation, freedom and justice.

Community Cohesion

The MCB Secretary General attended a reception on 29 March 2004 organised by the Kensington and Chelsea Council . The keynote address was delivered by the Conservative MP and Shadow Attorney General Dominic Grieve who spoke on Community Cohesion.

Saudi Embassy Dinner

Iqbal Sacranie, the Secretary General of the MCB and Khurshid Drabu, the MCB Adviser on Constitutional Affairs and Convenor of the Board of Counsellors were invited to dinner hosted by the Saudi Ambassador HRH Prince Faisal Al-Turki. The dinner was hosted at Ball Room, Claridges Hotel, London on 10 March 2004 and it was in honour of the visiting Saudi Shura Council.

Muslim Prison Advisor

The MCB wishes to congratulate Mr Ahtsham Ali on his acceptance of the role of Muslim Prison Adviser to commence on 4 May 2004.

The decision making panel comprised Peter Wrench, Director of Re-settlement HMP; William Noblett, the Chaplain General and Shiban Akbar, Chair of the MCB Social Affairs Committee who voted unanimously to appoint Mr Ali to this position.

Affiliate News

Notice to MCB Affiliates

The Muslim Council of Britain would like to remind its affiliates that they can advertise events, news and job opportunities nationally free of charge through the MCB website and MCB E-Newsletter.

- To register events go to: http://www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect/event_add.php
- To register community news go to: http://www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect/news_add.php
- To register jobs: send and email to: mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk.

Automatic registration will soon be possible insha'Allah.

Islamic Relief

2004 marks twenty years of emergency relief and other development work by MCB affiliate Islamic Relief - the largest British Muslim charity - founded by Dr Hany El Banna. Islamic Relief organised "The Evening of Inspiration" a variety show celebrating Muslim culture for the benefit of needy children around the world. The tour was held at Aston Event Centre in Birmingham, the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow, and the Royal Albert Hall in London on 9th, 10th and 12th April respectively. Over 8,000 people attended the events which featured amongst others, Zain Bhikha, Sami Yusuf, Native Deen, Imad Rami and Ahmed Ahmed, reflecting diverse ethnicity and culture.

FOSIS makes a mark at NUS conference

The UK national Muslim student body, FOSIS, which is affiliated to the Muslim Council of Britain, was actively involved in this year's National Union of Students (NUS) Annual Conference. FOSIS brought a record 85 delegates from various political factions and groups under a united banner.

The involvement of Muslim students had a direct impact on the outcome of the Presidential elections. They helped to ensure that the incumbent Labour students who 'every year let down the Muslims' would not win: tactical voting ensured that the left-wing candidate Kat Fletcher won, thus ensuring that a 22-year monopoly of NUS was brought to an end. James Lloyd was elected as National Secretary.

The most notable FOSIS success of the Conference was the election of Rumaana Habeeb (History & Politics, Bristol University) onto the NUS Steering Committee. With help and support from other students, Miss Habeeb became part of the committee that prepares the agenda, motions and order of Conference for a two-year term. Also, the election of preferred candidates John Kayan (International Relations, University of East London) and Habiba Hamid (President, Birkbeck College Student Union) was also seen as 'a good sign' that the NUS Conference will be more transparent and fair, no longer controlled by the Union of Jewish Students-Labour slate.

Muslim political participation at the NUS Conference also ensured that a motion on "Racism in Education" was passed: this mandated the NUS to work with diversity groups to ensure that anonymous marking would take place at all academic institutions. Importantly, a support to ensure that the Hijab, along with the Jewish skullcap, is allowed to be worn at all academic institutions will remain, and the NUS will campaign for it.

"It is a clear sign that Muslim students have woken up and realised that if we want results, we have to get involved and work with those who support our cause. I think the NUS and the student movement as a whole have realised that as well," commented Hasan Salim Patel, head of Student Politics for FOSIS.

FOSIS – the Federation of the Students' Islamic Societies in the United Kingdom and Eire was formed in 1962 and is one of the earliest national Muslim bodies in the country. www.fosis.org.uk

MAB President Stands down to fight European Elections

The Muslim Association of Britain has announced that its President Anas Altikriti, has stood down in order to fight the June 2004 European Parliamentary Elections in Yorkshire and Humberside under Respect, the Unity Coalition. Moving to appoint a successor, the Shura (Consultative) Council of MAB convened in an Extraordinary Meeting on Saturday the 27th of March and appointed Mr. Ahmed Al-Sheikh as its new President.

Picket in support of Palestinian rights

MCB affiliates Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE), the Palestine Return Centre (PRC), Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) and Friends of Al-Aqsa, with the support of the MCB, are among organisations that organised a picket in response to the disgraceful declaration by President Bush fully supporting Israel's so-called 'disengagement' plan. President Bush has demanded that the Palestinians accept the annexation of large parts of the West Bank and abandon their right of return. This runs against the very rules of international law and established human rights. The picket was held in front of the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square, London on Friday 16 April 2004.

Women's Awareness Week

MCB Affiliates Young Muslim Sisters organised Women's Awareness Week: 'Unveiling Islam'. The awareness week commenced with an official launch on 15 March 2004, followed by a range of events to educate individuals, help explore and understand rather than to ignore and prejudice the true potential of Muslim women, identifying their development and contributions in today's society. These events included Interfaith Dialogue, "Women: Prisoners of Faith?", social events with stalls and women only workshops, a combined Health & Careers Fair with children's play area and an educational seminar on the subject of "Unveiling Islam; Changing Perceptions Of Muslims Past, Present and Future." An Exhibition on the 'Empowerment of Women' was displayed throughout the week at Birmingham Central Library

For details about YMUK activities please visit <http://www.ymuk.net>

Muslim Youth Helpline (MYH) receive Award for Excellence

Muslim Youth Helpline, Britain's first telephone and e-mail counselling service targeting Muslim youth, was awarded the Uthman Dan Fodio Award for Excellence in Community Development at the fourth annual Muslim News Awards Ceremony on Wednesday 31 March 2004 .

The awards ceremony held in Central London celebrates outstanding positive contribution and achievement by British Muslims to society. Muslim Youth Helpline was presented the award by Baroness Scotland of Asthal, the Minister of State for the Criminal Justice System.

In the past 12 months Muslim Youth Helpline (MYH) has responded to over 1,400 enquiries from

young Muslims in need. Nevertheless, the service is outstripped by demand and Muslim Youth Helpline is currently only able to respond to 35% of young people who call its freephone number.

Speaking on BBC Radio 5 Live after the ceremony, Mohammed Mamdani (21), founding member of Muslim Youth Helpline urged Muslim leaders and Government departments to develop greater understanding of the religious, socio-economic and cultural needs of Muslim youth in the light of fears of radicalisation at the margins of the community.

“Whilst the vast majority of Muslim Youth Helpline’s clients seek support on common social concerns similar to their non-Muslim peers, many allude to a sense of alienation from mainstream society, particularly in the current political climate. Confronting this alienation must begin by breaking down the constant barrage of negative labels and stereotypes which affect the self-esteem of a young Muslim growing up in Britain . In addition, mosques and Islamic centres must continue to diversify their services to meet the specific social and cultural needs of Muslim youth. Government departments too, need to play a role in recognising models of good practice by investing in service provision which targets disillusioned Muslim youth.”



Since its conception in 1991 the Human Relief Foundation has saved lives and relieved suffering amongst hundreds of communities, through aid, education and care. Originally established as a response to the first Gulf War, HRF has become the first point of reference for donors and sister agencies who wish to help the people of Iraq. HRF have conducted projects around the world: in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe. HRF offices are now located in London, Birmingham, Rotterdam, Damascus, Peshawar, Baghdad and Basra.

E-Mail: donate@hrf.co.uk website: <http://www.hrf.co.uk>

Committees Update

Media Committee (MC)

Letter to BBC

The Secretary of the Media Committee wrote to Stephen Whittle, at the BBC on 6th April regarding Real Story: Britain's Suicide Bombers aired on BBC1 at 7.30 pm the previous day. The letter raised the use of the term “Islamic terrorists” in the programme, despite assurances that this phrase would not be used by the BBC. In response, Mike Lewis, the Series Producer of Real Story said “We referred to 'Islamic terrorists' on two occasions because that was the specific group we were describing - terrorist who attempt to justify their actions by reference to their faith. This in no way suggests that people of a similar faith would support or endorse their actions.” The Media Committee Secretary responded with the concern that “Despite the caveats added in the Kenyon programme

about the opposition of most Muslims to the views of al-Muhajiroun, I still believe this was not stated forcefully enough."

Please refer to the media section, letters to editors/producers at www.mcb.org.uk for the full text of correspondence.

Letter to the Daily Express

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB Media Committee wrote to Mr Peter Hill, Editor at the Daily Express on 16th March 2004 regarding a Daily Express story that claimed that an ICM poll for the Guardian revealed that: "half the Muslims questioned [in the UK] might consider being suicide bombers". The poll misrepresented British Muslims by misquoting the actual question posed and taking it out of context.

Please refer to the media section, letters to editors/producers at www.mcb.org.uk for the full text of correspondence.

Letter to the Sunday Express

The Secretary of the Media Committee wrote to the Sunday Express on 12th March 2004 enquiring whether the Sunday Express had breached its Code of Practice on the right to reply. The Editors have to date not printing an MCB letter in response to columnist Robert Kilroy Silk who had made untrue and derogatory remarks about the MCB.

Please refer to the media section, letters to editors/producers at www.mcb.org.uk for the full text of correspondence.

Letter to the BBC

The Secretary of the Media Committee wrote to Stephen Whittle, Director of Editorial Policy at the BBC on 14 March 2004 regarding a BBC Online feature on the Hindu (Thaipusam) in Malaysia. The sixth slide in the feature states that: "Even though Malaysia is an Islamic country, people here are tolerant.". The letter raised the concern that this "seems to suggest that the people of Malaysia are tolerant in spite of the fact that the majority of them are Muslim." A correction for this derogatory comment towards Islam and Muslim people was sought and the feature was changed following this representation.

Please refer to the media section, letters to editors/producers at www.mcb.org.uk for the full text of correspondence.

Letter to the Daily Telegraph

Inayat Bunglawala wrote to the Letters Editor at the Daily Telegraph on 29 March 2004 regarding an article by Barbara Amiel in which she championed that self-styled American terrorist hunter, Steven Emerson, hailing him as a veritable "encyclopedia on Islamic terrorism and its adherents in America" despite the fact that it was Emerson who claimed that Muslims were behind the 1995 bombing in Oklahoma City (CBS News, 4/19/95) and once said that Islam sanctions "genocide as part of its religious doctrine." (Jewish Monthly, March 1995).

Mr Bunglawala made the point that "Emerson is actually a passionate pro-Israeli who has for the last decade been engaged in an obsessive quest to undermine American Muslims and their leading organisations."

Please refer to the media section, letters to editors/producers at www.mcb.org.uk for the full text of correspondence.

Letter to the Financial Times

The Secretary of the MCB Media Committee wrote to the Editors of the Financial Times on 5th April 2004 regarding an article entitled "Islam in Britain" published in the FT on Saturday April 3rd 2004. The letter points out that despite the FT correspondent Friedereke having discussed the formation of the MCB with the MCB Secretary General, Iqbal Sacranie, the article boldly and erroneously asserts that the MCB was formed "at the behest of the government". In reality the formation of the Muslim Council

of Britain was the culmination of over three years of wide-ranging consultation, discussion and debate among leading national and regional Muslim organisations throughout the country about the need for a representative Muslim body to work for the common good.

Please refer to the media section, letters to editors/producers at www.mcb.org.uk for the full text of correspondence.

Letter to BBC Online

The Secretary of the Media Committee wrote to Pete Clifton Editor at BBC Online on 7 April 2004 regarding a story on the BBC website about the upsurge in trouble in parts of Iraq. Mr Bunglawala queried the reportage which stated "In nearby Falluja, over 20 people were reported killed in a US air strike" pointing out that Iraqi deaths were caused when the US fired missiles into some Iraqi homes and the dead included women and children. Mr Bunglawala asked that this be mentioned to help "explain why an increasing number of Iraqis are now viewing the US-led occupation with hostility."

In response Mr Clifton stated "We are doing our best to give a sensible overview, but verifying figures, or indeed seeking clarity about what is actually happening, is extremely difficult if not impossible. ...we are left with a mixture of US military statements, what Iraqi officials say, statements from hospitals, aid agencies etc. This, unsurprisingly, leaves us with an extremely confused picture...I asked our Middle East desk to put together a look at recent casualty figures. The result is here <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3625371.stm> It is clear that the casualties have included women and children, but getting precise picture is impossible at this point."

Please refer to the media section, letters to editors/producers at www.mcb.org.uk for the full text of correspondence.

Letter to the Sun Ombudsman

On 23 March 2004, the Secretary of the Media Committee wrote to the Sun Ombudsman, Mr William Newman concerning the column by Lord Janner seeking to support Israel's assassination of Shaykh Ahmad Yasin, the founder of the Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas whilst no effort was made to publish a rejoinder from the Muslim community to provide a balanced story. Mr Newman responded on 24 March stating "It is not in my remit to comment on editorial policy. That is entirely a matter for the editor." The Ombudsman has raised these concerns with the editor of the Sun.

Please refer to the media section, letters to editors/producers at www.mcb.org.uk for the full text of correspondence.

Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc)

The History of Islamic Medicine

Professor Aziz Sheikh, Chair of ReDoc, spoke at the Edinburgh International festival of Spirituality on 1 March 2004 on the subject of 'History of Islamic Medicine'. He gave a further speech on 5 March on 'A crisis of faith in science: Is there a need for a new enlightenment?' Co-panellists were Professor Wilson Poon and David Ferguson.

One World Concert

ReDoc Committee members Hassen Rasool and Ajmal Masroor represented the MCB at the One World Concert in Edinburgh on 6 March 2004.

Booklet launched on alternatives to drugs derived from pigs

A new booklet on 'Drugs of porcine origin and Clinical Alternatives' was launched in Birmingham on 26th April by Lord Phillip Hunt, Chair of the National Patient Safety Agency. Prof. Abdul Rashid Gatrud and Prof. Aziz Sheikh have worked in conjunction with HealthGains Solutions on behalf of the MCB to produce the booklet for healthcare professionals.

Also on the working team to produce the booklet were Dr Joseph Spitzer and Rabbi Abraham Adler, representing the Jewish community.

The booklet is for professional use and will be distributed in bulk to healthcare professionals in conjunction with the MCB. Patient versions of the booklet are in preparation and will be available in a range of languages.

The Medicines Partnership agency is considering a national day on this issue in their forthcoming 'Ask about Medicines Week'. Professors Gatrad and Sheikh are looking at ways of introducing changes in the British National Formulary to ensure that all prescribers are aware of the importance of respecting religious and cultural beliefs.

London Affairs Committee

Faith Leaders Meeting

A Faith leader's meeting was held on 10 March 2004, at the London Mayor's Office, attended by Mr Tanzeem Wasti, Chair of the MCB London Affairs Committee; Deputy Secretary General Dr Abdul Bari and Nusrat Chagtai. Amongst the issues discussed was the concern regarding the latest laws pertaining to the Hijab in France. Mr Wasti thanked Mayor Ken Livingston for his vocal support on this issue particularly for the press conference arranged by the Mayor to highlight his concerns about this new law as well as the letter he had written to the French government condemning this new law.

The meeting raised the issue of continuing concerns regarding the levels of arrests of young Muslim people by the security forces, and in some cases the treatment they receive during and after these arrests. According to the latest statistics more than 500 people have been arrested post 9/11 for security related issues yet of these only a handful reach court.

Nusrat Chagtai briefed the meeting regarding multi faith day, specifically the new Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Launch of 'Good Practice Guide' by MCB / DTI Project Consortium. Those present at the meeting agreed to attend this function when the invitation and dates are provided to them.

Call for Muslim representation on Police Complaints Commission

The Independent Police Complaints Commission. (IPCC) should include a representative of the Muslim community in order to engender trust between the commission and the Muslim community. This was one of the suggestions made by Mr Tanzeem Wasti, Chair of the MCB's London Affairs Committee to the Commission at a meeting on 11 March at Westminster Central Hall. It was also proposed that the MCB Legal Affairs Committee liaise with the IPCC. It was stressed that the IPCC should ensure a level of independence which will be key to their credibility.

London Civic Forum

Mr Wasti attended the Capital Theme Future meeting organised by the London Civic Forum on 29 March 2004.

What is London?

The London Assembly organised a seminar on the topic "What is London?" arranged by the Greater London Authority at City Hall. Mayor Livingstone, his advisors and Michael Heseltine contributed to the full day seminar which was attended by 25 delegates. The seminar began by providing a historical context for London. Mr Wasti, Chair of the MCB London Affairs Committee met with a number of GLA officials and London Assembly Members and advised them on the role that the MCB is playing in the capital on a range of issues such as education, government and security.

Meeting with GLA

A delegation from the MCB comprising Dr Abdul Bari, Deputy Secretary General, Mr Wasti and Mr Abdal Ullah, the Secretary of the London Affairs Committee, met with GLA representatives Redmond O'Neil, the Mayor's political advisor, Atma Singh and Farah Ikram.

A number of items were discussed regarding MCB and GLA activities for 2004 / 2005. A conference for Imams has been arranged on 27 April 2004 at City Hall. For further information please contact Mr Wasti at admin@mcb.org.uk

London Development Authority

The London Affairs Committee is working with the London Development Agency (LDA) to conduct a consultation programme regarding their strategy "Sustaining Success". A meeting has been arranged for 21 April 2004 at which forty to fifty MCB representatives will brief the LDA on their work and discover areas for mutual cooperation and development in the fields of regeneration, employment, investment and infrastructure. These areas are all of great importance for Muslims in London.

Muslim Safety Forum

The Muslim Safety Forum came into being in 2003 and the MCB is one of its key members. Mr Wasti has attended two of the initial MSF meetings to oversee its constitution. Other MCB representatives present at these meetings held at Scotland Yard were Dr Abdur Raheem Khan and Barrister Abdurahman Jafar.

On 30 March 2004 following the arrests of eight Muslims around Crawley and London, Assistant Commissioner David Veness, and five other officers from Scotland Yard came to brief the MSF at Islamic Cultural Centre on the latest situation with regard to the arrests made that day.

Prime Minister of Palestine

Mr Wasti was invited by the Institute of International Affairs to attend a reception for the Prime Minister of Palestine, Mr Ahmed Queri during his recent visit to London. Mr Wasti was introduced to the Prime Minister by the Palestinian Ambassador, Mr Afif Safieh. Mr Wasti briefed the Palestinian delegation on the role of the MCB and the stand that the MCB has taken with regard to the Palestine. A further meeting will be arranged with a delegation from the MCB on the Prime Minister's return to the UK.

Health & Medical Committee (HMC)

Decision on Halal meat welcome

The provisional decision of DEFRA (the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) not to ban the slaughter of red meat by Halal/Shechita methods has been welcomed by the Muslim and Jewish communities. These methods do not allow the prior stunning of an animal before the cut is made to the neck. The decision, however, is still to be ratified and is due to be finalised in July 2004. The MCB's Health and Medical Committee proposes to send in further submissions to DEFRA to reinforce their previous statements regarding stunning.

The government's Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) however is now recommending (Recommendation 62) a new procedure called 'post-cut stunning' which involves stunning the animal after the cut is made. This apparently is being proposed in response to allegations that the halal/shechita methods of slaughter causes undue pain to the animal. They are inviting comments on how any such action could be taken forward and, if relevant, what the maximum interval could be between cut and stun.

Any person or organisation interested in seeing and commenting on the DEFRA document on halal/shechita slaughter can obtain a copy by writing to Tony Hughes, Animal Welfare Division, Branch D, Defra. The deadline for comments is 24 June 2004. For further details please refer to <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/fawc-slaughter/letter.htm>

Food Standards Agency

Dr A Majid Katme, Health & Medical Committee member, has attended a number of meetings organised by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). These include an Open Board Meeting on 11 March 2004, the Muslim Working Group meeting on 25 February and a Meat Hygiene Policy Forum on 22 January. Dr Katme has produced an Islamic Glossary which he has made available to the FSA.

Women & Family Affairs Committee (WAFAC)

National Association Community Family Trust Conference

Dr Reefat Drabu, Chair of the MCB Women & Family Affairs Committee attended a national conference organised by the National Association Community Family Trust (NACFT). Dr Drabu noted that support for the NACFT was generic and that no government funded faith based support is

available in any family conflict. The WAFA Committee is due to explore problems within Muslim families with a view to setting up service provision.

Marriage and Relationship Support grant

The MCB WAFA Committee had made an application for a Marriage and Relationship Support grant to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in order to 'Investigate causes of marital breakdown amongst British born Muslims.'. However, the committee failed to secure the grant and is requesting feedback on this as it may provide evidence for unmet needs

Meeting with Women & Equality Unit & Women's National Commission

Dr Reefat Drabu met with the Director of the Women & Equality Unit and the Women's National Commission Policy Manager to make them aware of MCB. Regularly quarterly meetings have been arranged at which the MCB will be represented.

Gender on the Agenda

Dr Reefat Drabu attended the FCO meeting on 15 March 2004 entitled 'Gender on the Agenda - using a gender perspective to meet UK's international priorities.' The meeting was attended by a hundred delegates and addressed by Baroness Symons.

Social Affairs Committee (SAC)

Media and a Multi-Faith Society

An all day "National Conference on the media and a multi-faith society" organised by The Media Trust in association with the Inter Faith Network for the UK and respect was held on 31 March 2004 in London. The Conference was attended by Shibani Akbar; Chair of the Social Affairs Committee and Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra; Chair of the Masjid & Community Affairs Committee.

Shibani Akbar co-facilitated a workshop on 'The press and religion' with Stephen Bates, Religious Affairs Correspondent, The Guardian. The workshop looked at (a) the current coverage and the religious press; (b) working together of faith communities and inter faith groups with journalists and editors to deliver better programmes; (c) recommendations for the future.

Keynote addresses were delivered by (i) Fiona Mactaggart MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Race & Equality, Community Policy, and Civil Renewal, Home Office on 'the role of faith and inter faith as important dimensions in community cohesion' (ii) Roger Bolton, radio & TV presenter and MD of Flame TV and Roger Bolton Productions spoke on 'the role of the media in a multi-faith society'.

Further information can be obtained from www.faihandmedia.com.

New on the MCB Website

Media/Press Releases -

17 Apr 2004, Israeli State Terrorism Will Be Defeated

11 Apr 2004, Muslims Fail to Understand the Cardinal's Remarks

09 Apr 2004, Response to US Minister Counselor Press Release of April 8th

08 Apr 2004, USA Embarked On Israeli-Style Siege of Fallujah, Iraq

08 Apr 2004, MCB Delegation Meets Home Secretary

31 Mar 2004, MCB Community Guidelines to Imams and British Muslim Organisations

26 Mar 2004, Lord Carey's Remarks Show Myopic Vision and Religious Prejudice

24 Mar 2004, Books 4 Schools

22 Mar 2004, MCB Condemns Israel's Terrorist Murder of Shaykh Ahmad Yasin
19 Mar 2004, Appalling Desecration of Muslim Graves in Plumstead
16 Mar 2004, British Muslims Visit Spanish Ambassador To Express Condolence
13 Mar 2004, MCB condemns terrorist atrocities in Madrid
10 Mar 2004, British Muslims Mourn Death of Dr Ayyub Thakur
09 Mar 2004, Muslims Welcome Return of Five British Guantanamo Detainees
02 Mar 2004, British Muslims Shocked Over Terrible Killing of Muslims on Day of Ashura

Media/Letters to the Editor -

5th April 2004, The Financial Times, Correcting a misreporting on the MCB
29 March 2004 , The Daily Telegraph, Steven Emerson championed by Barbara Amiel
14 March 2004 , BBC Online , Derogatory reference removed

Media/Speeches -

20 April 2004, Secretary General' s speech at 'Religious Tolerance in Britain' at the East London Mosque & London Muslim Centre
24 February 2004, Secretary General's speech at the Corporate Social Responsibility seminar, Singapore

Library/Articles & Essays -

1st April 2004, 'We must unite to defeat this threat', by Inayat Bunglawala

New on the MCBDirect Website

MCB*Direct* is the Muslim Council of Britain's community information service. The Internet plays a central role in the provision of the service - visit the project's redesigned website at www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect. MCB*Direct*'s objectives are to widen the sharing of information and expertise within the community, increase awareness of best practice initiatives and services, and promote a more informed understanding of Muslims and Islam throughout our society. The project is an initiative of the MCB's Research & Documentation Committee.

MCBDirect Helpline

MCBDirect's helpline number is 0845 1 23 23 63.

MCBDirect Vacancy

Applications are invited for a two year full-time web editor/community information officer post with the Muslim Council of Britain based at Stratford. Closing date for applications is 15th May 2004.

For further details please refer to <http://www.mcb.org.uk/vacancies/>

MCBDirect has posted many exciting features on the website. These include reviews of books, events, individuals etc.

Diary of a Muslim GP: Depression – do Muslims get depressed?

Iqbal Sacranie Interviewed by The Daily Telegraph

Review of 'Allah Gave Me Two Ears To Hear'

Census 2001: Muslims and Housing

Do we choose our own destiny or are we merely characters in a play?

Do we choose our own destiny or are we merely characters in a play?

Hassen Rasool Mesmerises Audience at Edinburgh's Middle Eastern One World Peace and Justice Concert

Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra Reviews 'Safe Children, Sound Learning – Guidance for Madressahs'

The Splendours of Leighton House Museum Part II: 'Art Reflecting Faith'

Over £50,000 Already Raised for Books 4 Schools Project!

Mosques From London to Edinburgh Spread MCB's Message of Peace.

The Splendours of Leighton House Museum Part I

Islamic Relief presents in celebration of its 20th anniversary: An Evening of Inspiration

Channel 4 Seeks Participants for Shariah TV

Don't Cry Palestine, Don't Cry

Muhammad. (May God's Peace and Blessings be upon him). His Life Based on the Earliest Sources

Books 4 Schools: Tickets Still Available For Manchester Books 4 Schools Launch

Shakespeare and Islam: Interview with Director of Globe Education

Recycling: Waste Not, Want Not

Spain: Mourning The Victims Of Terror

An Evening with the Stars at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich

Diary of a Muslim GP: Smoking – stub it out!

Review of 'Hilmy the Hippo Learns about the Creation'

New regional campaign to recruit ethnic minority police officers

Environments for All Conference

Sami Yusuf to perform at Manchester Books 4 Schools Event

World Book Day 2004

Shakespeare and Islam- Globe Education Spring 2004

The Alternative New Year's Message

Professor Rashid Gatrad OBE Profiled in BMJ

New Course on Islamic Medical Ethics

To advertise community news and events please contact mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk

Events

Event:	MCB Annual General Meeting
Date	22 May 2004
Held By:	The Muslim Council of Britain
Venue:	Brent Town Hall, London
Contact:	admin@mcb.org.uk

Event:	Palestinian Conference in Berlin
Date:	Saturday 15 May 2004.
Held By:	Palestinian Return Centre, London , and the Palestinian Community Berlin
Venue:	Berlin
Contact:	The Palestinian Return Centre, London, Tel: 00 44 208 453 0919, Fax: 00 44 208 453 0994 , E-mail: info@prc.org.uk , Website: www.prc.org.uk or The Association of the Palestinian Community in Berlin, Tel: 0049 308133508, Fax: 00491719808990, E-mail: gabusamra@hotmail.com
Information:	This conference has been organised to commemorate the Nakba and reaffirm adherence to the right of return. Participants include: Azmi Bishara – Palestinian leader from 1948 territories, Jamal Al Shati – Head of the refugee affairs bureau in the Palestinian Legislative Council, Khalid Al Tirani – Director of the American Muslims for Jerusalem centre in Washington, Muhammad Khalil 'Aql – Member of the Jordanian parliament from Al Baqa'a refugee camp and Salah Salah – Head of refugee affairs in the Palestinian National Council. Closing date for registration: 15 April 2004



INTERPAL is a non-political, non-profit making British charity that focuses solely on the provision of relief and development aid to the poor and needy of Palestine the world over, primarily in Palestine and the refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon.

The Muslim Council of Britain

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